



NEWS

From County Supervisor Paul Biane

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Jan. 31, 2006

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Block Grant Funding Revives Traffic Congestion Relief Project

SAN BERNARDINO - The Board of Supervisors on Tuesday agreed to use un-programmed Community Development Block Grant funds to revive a traffic congestion relief project that skyrocketing construction costs threatened to derail.

The County recently opened bids on a project to install synchronized signals at seven San Bernardino Avenue stop-sign-controlled intersections in Bloomington and unincorporated Fontana. The project aims to improve traffic flow and, in turn, reduce vehicle emissions.

The lowest project bid was about \$1.2 million higher than officials expected because of escalating construction prices, so County staff began exploring other options to ensure the project stayed on track.

Second District Supervisor Paul Biane and Fifth District Supervisor Josie Gonzales identified \$365,328 in un-programmed Community Development Block

Grant funds from their districts that could be used to install sidewalks, handicap ramps, curbs and gutters at the seven intersections: Fontana/Elm, Beech, Hemlock, Like Oak, Redwood, Linden and Locust avenues.

The Block Grant funding, which the Board of Supervisors approved Tuesday, along with about \$280,000 from San Bernardino Associated Governments, the county's transportation agency, will allow the signal project to proceed.

"I'm glad we were able to resolve this funding issue," Biane said. "San Bernardino Avenue turns into a parking lot during peak traffic because of the abundance of stop-sign-controlled intersections. The new synchronized signals will allow much smoother traffic flow."

"By keeping traffic moving, we also will greatly reduce the amount of harmful emissions trucks and cars spew into the air along this heavily traveled route every day," Gonzales said.

San Bernardino County originally received \$2.8 million federal Congestion Management Air Quality grant for the signalization project on San Bernardino Avenue. However, the total project cost is about \$4 million.

In addition to funding already identified, the County hopes to initiate a cooperative agreement with Fontana to split of cost of installing a signal at Fontana/Elm Avenues. Any additional funding will come from the County's share of gas tax proceeds.

Transportation officials expect to award the contract for the signal project in mid-February. It will take about nine months to install the seven signals and make necessary street improvements.